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on Tuesday, 3 February 1998, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. SOMAVIA (Chile)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

The PRESIDENT said that the programme of work was very interesting because, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B, the Council was responsible for reforming its working methods and those of its subsidiary bodies. It was up to the Council to act upon the suggestions made by the General Assembly, the Secretary-General and the countries and organizations which had given thought to ways of reforming the Council and improving the way it operated.

The agenda had been reviewed in 1997 in order to make sure that it did not overlap with that of the General Assembly and the functional commissions. Those efforts should continue.

At a time when one of the fastest-growing regions of the world was being shaken by a financial crisis it was essential to reaffirm the international community's commitment to free trade and to resist the temptation of resorting to protectionism. The choice of market access in the context of globalization as the theme for the high-level segment was very appropriate in that connection. Particular attention should be given to the situation of the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, and to the consequences of the Uruguay Round negotiation for those countries. It would also be necessary to consider what steps should be taken to ensure that trade really became a factor contributing to the well-being of all. UNCTAD had an important contribution to make in that regard.

Since 1998 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights it would be appropriate to devote the coordination segment entirely to issues concerning the coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The Council should take the opportunity to make sure that the issue of human rights and the safeguarding of freedoms remained a top priority for the United Nations system as a whole.

The operational activities segment would be devoted to the advancement of women. The Women's Environment and Development Organization had proposed that since the General Assembly was to examine the outcome of both the Beijing and

Copenhagen conferences in the year 2000, it should consider them together, and had further suggested that on that occasion delegations should be composed of equal numbers of men and women. In that connection it was essential to increase the presence of women in the Secretariat.

The general segment was where revitalization was most needed in order for the Council to be really able to pilot the entire economic and social machinery of the Organization. That segment would now be divided into two, with economic and environmental issues on the one hand and social and human rights issues on the other. Members would have to get used to speaking of an "Economic and Social Council system", an integrated system in which all elements, while retaining their own characteristics, worked together for the achievement of common goals. Finally the new humanitarian affairs segment would expand the Council's sphere of responsibility.

Not only was the programme of work very exciting but there would be a first attempt at high-level cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions. There would be a special session devoted to integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of United Nations conferences and summits.

The Council would also have to consider the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/227 which provided for reviewing the mandates, composition, functions and working methods of its technical commissions, expert groups and bodies and other organs of the Council. That exercise must be completed in 1998.

In substance, the Council had two mandates, one political the other administrative. It was necessary to strike a balance between those two functions. While the political aspect of the Council's work was obvious, its management role was seldom talked about. Yet if the Council was to have the influence that it was supposed to have in the Organization, it must play that role well. General Assembly resolution 52/12 proposed that the Council should consider ways of spreading its work throughout the year; that seemed sensible and would improve the Council's efficiency. By fully assuming its increased responsibilities in the area of administration and management, the Council would open up a very interesting area of specialization, a kind of "management diplomacy", which would make it possible to reconcile various interests and improve the quality of the Council's work. That aspect of the Council's work had no political "visibility". It merely involved establishing appropriate

structures and working methods so that in future there would no longer be any need to think about how to improve the Council's efficiency.

Finally, he informed members that pursuant to Council decision 1997/322 the Secretary-General would address the Council on Friday, 6 February at 10 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (E/1998/2 and Corr.1, E/1998/L.3)

The PRESIDENT announced that the European Union had requested the inclusion in the agenda of an item entitled "Social and human rights questions: advancement of women". In its resolution 52/100, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the various options for convening a high-level plenary review to appraise and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Beijing Platform for Action five years after its adoption; that report would be considered by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session, thus enabling the General Assembly, through the Council, to take a decision on the issue of its fifty-second session, as soon as possible after the Commission's session. Accordingly, the additional item would be taken up at the Council's resumed organizational session on 7 and 8 May 1998.

Mr. REYES RODRÍGUEZ (Cuba) said that he would like further information regarding the themes to be discussed during the consideration of that issue. It had been his understanding that the report would be considered by the Commission on the Status of Women; that would help the Council to take a decision on the issue. He recalled that the Commission on Human Rights would be meeting in March and suggested that the bureau of the Council should ask the Chairman of that Commission at its fifty-fourth session to emphasize implementation of resolution 50/227 and to submit specific proposals that would serve as a basis for the Council's coordination segment.

The PRESIDENT requested delegations to consult with one another and come to an agreement.

Mr. GOODERHAM (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that he believed that the President was referring to a proposal made in informal consultations, which would give the Council the possibility of reviewing the outcome of the debate in the Commission on the Status of Women. In order for the General Assembly to be able to take note of the Council's

recommendations, the Council would have to consider the matter at its resumed organizational session in May. If the Cuban delegation still considered it necessary to hold informal consultations on the matter, the European Union was fully prepared to do so.

Mr. REYES RODRÍGUEZ (Cuba) said that his delegation would prefer that informal consultations should be held on the way to deal with the medium-term review of the outcomes of all international conferences in the social field. He noted that, in addition to the results of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the General Assembly should also review the results of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. It would therefore be necessary to have a clearer idea of the way to deal with the two matters at the same time.

The PRESIDENT requested delegations to consult with one another. He also suggested that informal consultations should be held on elections to the Executive Board of the World Food Programme so that that matter could be considered at the Council's resumed organizational session in May. The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations had recommended that the Council should approve its provisional programme of work for 1998. Since delegations had not had time to examine the programme of work, the matter would be taken up at the next meeting. Consultations on the timing of the Council's humanitarian segment were continuing.

BASIC PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COUNCIL (E/1998/1)

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh), Vice-President, read out amendments to the proposed basic programme of work, which had been agreed upon in informal consultations.

Mr. GOODERHAM (United Kingdom) requested more information on point 6 in the list of amendments to be made to the Council's basic programme of work, which concerned the report of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. It had been proposed that the title of the report to be considered should be "Report of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs", which would appear under agenda item 14 (d). During informal consultations, delegations had already questioned whether that report should be included in the basic programme of work, since the special session of the General Assembly devoted to the question of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances would be held in June 1998, prior

to the Council's substantive session, which was scheduled to be held in July. Given that timetable, the Council would not be able to consider the report.

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh), Vice-President, said that the question had been discussed in informal consultations, where it had become apparent that there was a scheduling problem and that it was necessary to decide how the Council could consider the report since, according to established practice, reports of commissions were transmitted through the Council and examined by it. The report in question should be included in the list of documents to be considered at the resumed organizational session and deleted from the basic programme of work.

Mr. REYES RODRÍGUEZ (Cuba) said that, before a decision was taken on the matter, the Secretary of the Council should inform the Council of the programme of work of the next session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, especially since the Commission was going to act as the preparatory body for the special session of the General Assembly. At its 1997 substantive meeting, the Commission had divided its work into two parts: it had worked one week as the preparatory body and the rest of the time it had dealt with its regular work. He wished to know whether the Commission would proceed in the same way in 1998.

Ms. KELLEY (Secretary) said that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs had decided that, for its 1998 session, it would devote one week to its regular agenda and one week to its work as the preparatory body for the special session of the General Assembly.

Mr. GOODERHAM (United Kingdom) said that he did not yet have a clear idea of the situation, and the question should be examined in greater detail. If the Commission on Narcotic Drugs had to report to the Council only on its regular work, the Council could consider the Commission's report at its substantive session in July 1998. On the other hand, he wondered whether it was really necessary for the Commission acting as the preparatory body for the special session to report to the Council, as indicated in document E/1998/1, and for the Council to consider the Commission's report at its resumed organizational session or in July. The Council should give some thought to the matter in order to chose the best course of action.

Ms. MORGAN (Mexico) shared the doubts expressed by the representative of the United Kingdom with respect to the need for the Council to consider the report of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs acting as the preparatory body for

the special session. In its resolution, the General Assembly requested the Commission to submit to it the results of its work. It would be useful to have information about precedents, such as the manner in which the Commission on Sustainable Development had reported on its preparatory work for the special session of the General Assembly to review and appraise the implementation of Agenda 21.

Mr. REYES RODRÍGUEZ (Cuba) said that the Commission's report on its preparatory work should be submitted not to the Council but to the General Assembly, which had given the Commission its mandate. The Commission's report on its regular work should, as usual, be submitted to the Council for consideration.

Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that the Council was dealing with a question of substance, not of procedure, which would have to be considered in connection with the follow-up review of major conferences. In each case, one of the Council's technical commissions was assigned to act as preparatory body but the review process remained within the competence of the General Assembly. For the review of the outcome of the Rio Conference, for example, the Commission on Sustainable Development had submitted its report directly to the General Assembly, since that Commission acted as the open-ended preparatory body within an exercise that concerned only the Assembly. Since the problem would resurface, it was essential to decide, once and for all, on the procedure to be followed, for example, for the follow-up to the Beijing Conference. On the other hand, the problem would not occur for the follow-up to the World Conference for Social Development, since the Assembly had established its own group for that purpose. The Council should study the question and decide on the way it wished to consider reports of preparatory bodies. Otherwise, it would face a scheduling problem since most of the commissions met in March or April and sessions of the Assembly were held before the Council's session. However, it would be useful if the results of the work of the special session of the Assembly were submitted to the Council, as had been done in the case of Agenda 21. The members of the Council must therefore decide how advisable it was to keep that question in the programme of work. On the other hand, the report of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on its regular work must be included in the programme of work.

The PRESIDENT said that, in view of the consequences that it entailed, that decision must be taken collectively by the members of the Council following a more exhaustive study of the matter.

Mr. HYNES (Canada) said that Canada attached the greatest importance to the examination of the question of humanitarian affairs, which had not yet been settled. During informal consultations, a discussion had been held on the timing of the humanitarian segment and on the modalities to be recommended to the General Assembly. Several delegations, including his delegation, had proposed that the Secretariat should provide the Council with a number of options, and that informal consultations should be held for that purpose, since delegations had to request instructions from their capitals before they could express their views on the matter. His delegation was pleased that the Vice-President of the Council would chair the consultations, and it wished to assure him of its full cooperation.

The PRESIDENT said that he took it that the pending matters, including item 14 (d) and the item on humanitarian affairs, both of which required further study, would be discussed in informal consultations.

PROCLAMATION OF INTERNATIONAL YEARS (E/1997/L.32/Rev.2)

The PRESIDENT said that, by its decision 1997/320, the Council had decided to postpone to its organizational session for 1998 consideration of the draft resolution entitled "Proclamation of international years" (E/1997/L.32/Rev.2), which had been submitted by the Russian Federation.

Mr. TCHOULKOV (Russian Federation) said that, following informal consultations with the principal groups interested in the question, agreement had been reached on the elaboration of a new version of the draft resolution on proclamation of international years. The new version would be formally introduced as soon as it had been circulated to delegations.

REPORTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (E/1997/L.23 and Add.2, E/1997/L.44 and E/1997/L.62 (programme budget implications); E/1998/L.4)

The PRESIDENT recalled that the Council in its decision 1997/321 had decided to postpone to its organizational session for 1998 consideration of the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the sixteenth session and to request the Secretariat to provide additional written information on the programme budget implications of

any decisions. The item would be taken up at a later date after the issue of document E/1998/L.4 on the programme budget implications of the decisions.

REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS

Oral draft decision

The PRESIDENT said that, as in previous years, the executive secretaries of the regional commissions had suggested a theme for consideration of the item entitled "Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields". Delegations had reached agreement on the suggestion in the course of informal consultations. He therefore invited the Council to adopt the following draft decision, entitled "Regional cooperation":

"The Economic and Social Council decides to consider at its substantive session of 1998, under the agenda item entitled 'Regional cooperation', the theme 'Review and reform of the regional commissions' on the understanding that the topic will be considered in conjunction with the agenda item entitled 'Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B'."

The oral draft decision was adopted.

ELECTIONS, NOMINATIONS AND CONFIRMATIONS (E/1998/3; E/1998/L.1, E/1998/L.2 and Corr.1 and Add.1)

Confirmations

The PRESIDENT drew the attention of the Council to document E/1998/L.2 and Corr.1 and Add.1, containing the names of the representatives of the functional commissions which had been submitted for confirmation by the Council since the close of the resumed substantive session for 1997. He pointed out that, as was indicated in document E/1998/L.2/Corr.1, the name of the representative in the Brazilian delegation had changed.

He took it that the Council wished to confirm the nominations contained in document E/1998/L.2 and Corr.1 and Add.1.

It was so decided.

Elections postponed from previous sessions

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to consider the vacancies in subsidiary bodies which were listed in document E/1998/L.1.

Commission on Science and Technology for Development

The PRESIDENT announced that the Bahamas, Bolivia and Uruguay had been endorsed by the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States to fill the vacant seats reserved for that Group for a term beginning on the date of election.

In the absence of any other candidates, he took it that the Council wished to elect the Bahamas, Bolivia and Uruguay by acclamation for a term beginning on the date of election.

The Bahamas, Bolivia and Uruguay were elected by acclamation.

The PRESIDENT said that, in accordance with Council decision 1995/312, he would draw lots to determine the terms of office of the newly elected members of the Commission. Of the 10 Latin American and Caribbean members elected, the first five names drawn would serve for a term of four years expiring on 31 December 2001; the remaining five names drawn would serve for a term of two years expiring on 31 December 1999.

Bolivia, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Uruguay and Venezuela were elected for a term of four years; the Bahamas, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba and Panama were elected for a term of two years.

Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting

The PRESIDENT announced that Argentina, Spain and Thailand had been nominated respectively by the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, the Group of Western European and other States and the Group of Asian States to fill the vacant seats reserved for those Groups for a term beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 1999.

In the absence of any other candidates, he took it that the Council wished to elect Argentina, Spain and Thailand by acclamation.

Ms. KING (United States of America) asked whether the Economic and Social Council was entitled to elect candidates to fill vacancies in the Working Group, given that it was an expert group of UNCTAD.

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh), Vice-President, replied that the Council had decided at the substantive session of 1997 held in Geneva that it would proceed to elect representatives to the Working Group pending a final decision, but that the Group would report on its work to UNCTAD pursuant to the Midrand Declaration.

Ms. KELLEY (Secretary of the Council) read out the provisions of Council decision 1997/307, which confirmed that it was still in order for the Council to proceed to elections. The preparations for the special high-level review meeting to consider the functioning of the Working Group would be carried out in June and July 1998 and the actual review was scheduled for October. Pending the outcome of the review, the Council should continue to elect the members of the Working Group.

Argentina, Spain and Thailand were elected by acclamation.

Committee for the United Nations Population Award

The PRESIDENT announced that Romania was a candidate for the vacant seat reserved for the Group of Eastern European States for a term beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 2000. In the absence of any other candidates, he took it that the Council wished to elect Romania by acclamation.

Romania was elected by acclamation.

Programme Coordination Board of the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

The PRESIDENT announced that Algeria was a candidate for the vacant seat reserved for the Group of African States for a term beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 2000. In the absence of any other candidates, he took it that the Council wished to elect Algeria by acclamation.

Algeria was elected by acclamation.

The PRESIDENT, speaking with reference to the remaining vacancies listed in document E/1998/L.1, said that in the absence of any other candidates, he took it that the Council agreed to postpone the elections to a future session.

It was so decided.

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh), Vice-President, said that a note had been circulated to delegations concerning the programme of work for informal consultations on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B. It had been decided, pursuant to Council decision 1997/322, that 20 meetings would be devoted to that exercise. The consultations would be held successively with the four priority organs referred to in resolution 50/227, the functional commissions responsible for following up major conferences, other competent bodies and the regional commissions. Lastly, attention would be given

to the measures to be taken with a view to the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B.

The PRESIDENT said that he had been asked why the Economic and Social Council was not meeting in its own chamber.

Ms. KELLEY (Secretary of the Council) said that the Economic and Social Council Chamber could not accommodate the 54 representatives of the States members of the Council and the 58 observers who followed the Council's proceedings.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.